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Revenue Estimating Conference Scheduled for December ??

*Sen. Sikkema reiterates need for immediate early conference;
\$140 million hole has appeared in fiscal year 2004 budget*

Lansing - A state revenue estimating conference has yet to be scheduled by State Treasurer Jay Rising, putting the state's financial situation even more at risk.

Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema called for an early conference after hearing about falling state revenues coupled with spending increases proposed by the governor. The latest numbers show an estimated \$140 million deficit in the fiscal year 2004 budget. As current chairman of the conference, it is up to Rising to set the schedule, and he is apparently considering early December.

Sikkema, R-Wyoming, said he is concerned the governor's office isn't getting the message that spending money without talking about the state's financial situation is unacceptable.

"The governor's office said the conference - once it's scheduled - will not address the next fiscal year, which is a blatant attempt to circumvent the facts," Sikkema said. "If they are ready to spend next year's money, they better be ready to talk about how much money we will have next year."

Sikkema said he hopes that the conference will help everyone in Lansing face the reality that committing to spending increases while revenues are falling is not fiscally responsible.

"The numbers coming in should make all of us concerned," said Sikkema, R-Wyoming. "What's more disconcerting is listening to the governor's office telling everyone we shouldn't worry. They haven't yet realized that the light at the end of the tunnel isn't daylight, it's a freight train bearing down on us."

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